

Week Ending Friday, May 27, 1994

**Remarks at the University of  
California in Los Angeles, California**  
*May 20, 1994*

Thank you so much for allowing me to be part of this wonderful occasion and for the university medal. You know, for a person like me who is a diehard basketball fan, just walking in Pauley Pavilion is a great honor. I dreamed of being here for many years, but I never thought that it would be on this kind of occasion. *[Laughter]* I'm proud to be here to honor the university's 75th anniversary and to honor your chancellor on his 25th anniversary of service. It is the sort of commitment our country could do with more of, and I honor it, and I know you do, too.

To my good friend Mayor Riordan; President Peltason; Regent Sue Johnson; President Shapiro; to Carol Goldberg-Ambrose, the chair of your Academic Senate; to Kate Anderson and Khosrow Khosravani—we had a great talk over there. I hope we didn't earn any conduct demerits. But the two students told me a lot about UCLA. *[Laughter]* To all of you, I thank you for the chance to be here. The spirit in this room has been truly moving to me today.

This is a sad day for our country and for my family because we mourn the loss of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. She was a remarkable woman of courage and dignity, who loved things that ennobled the human spirit. She and President Kennedy inspired me and an entire generation of Americans to see the nobility of helping others and the good that could come in public service. In later years, and particularly in this last year, it was my family's privilege to get to know her personally and to see that the image which was projected to all the world was more than met by the true person behind the image. Today, as we offer our prayers and best wishes to her family, I think it well to remember that Jackie Kennedy and her husband called us to a time when the world was full of chal-

lenges that we saw in terms of possibilities, not problems. We saw our own lives in terms of promise, not pessimism. We thought our job here on Earth was to build up, not tear down; to unite, not to divide.

I say to the students who are here from this magnificent institution, you now have an education as fine as the world can afford. The question now is, as you go out into the world, what is your attitude about yourselves, each other, your country, and your future.

UCLA, as I watched that slide show it was clear to me again, is an example of America's faith in the future, the thing that's kept us going for 218 years now. Seventy-five years ago, this was just a tiny 2-year teachers college on a dirt road in Hollywood. Now, it's one of the leading research institutions in the world and a bridge to the future for tens of thousands of Americans and people who come from all around the world to be here.

There's no better place to discuss the future than here in California, America's last frontier. For all of your present difficulties, don't ever forget that California is still America's America, the cutting edge for a nation still a symbol of hope and optimism throughout the world.

I want to say that I very much envy those of you who are beginning your future here and now, on the edge of this new century. Many say that this generation of college graduates is filled with pessimism, with a sense of generational despair that our glory days are behind us. Americans of my generation have been bombarded by images on television shows, and even one book, about the so-called Generation X, filled with cynics and slackers. Well, what I have seen today is not a generation of slackers but a generation of seekers, and I am much encouraged.

To be sure, you are beginning your journey in uncertain times. Many of the college graduates of 1994 were born in 1973. That was a watershed year in American life. You see, from the end of World War II until 1973,

family income doubled in America, and we lived in an era of prosperity that we almost came to take for granted. The middle class grew ever larger and more secure; our country was stronger. People just took it for granted that they could get jobs they could hold for a lifetime, that they would always do better every year than they did the year before, that they would be able to afford to send their children to college, to have a comfortable retirement, to own their own homes, and to take care of their parents.

Since then, most Americans have worked harder and harder for the same or lower incomes. Our society has suffered unbelievable stresses as broken homes and unwed mothers have become commonplace. In many places devastated by poverty and despair, we have seen the absolute collapse of families and work itself and the sense of community. And in that vacuum have rushed gangs and drugs and violence, the kind of random violence that today often makes neighbors seem like strangers and strangers thought of as enemies.

In the time that many of you went from the first grade through high school graduation, when all this was going on, your National Government was embroiled in a sense of gridlock and paralysis and high rhetoric and low action. The deficit quadrupled, but there were no investments made adequate to the challenges of the future, and many of our tough problems were talked about but not acted on.

Here in this county, you've experienced earthquakes of all kinds, not just the real earthquake of January but social and economic upheavals. The trends that are shaking and remaking our entire society have hit California first and hardest.

Next month many college graduates will move on to their first full-time jobs. And I wonder how many of you have, like me, laughed and almost cried reading that wonderful Doonesbury comic strip—that is, on some days I think it's wonderful; some days I'm not so sure—[*laughter*]*—*which means I probably feel the same way about Mr. Trudeau that he feels about me—[*laughter*]*—*you know, the great Doonesbury strip about the students at the college graduation trading stories about their job openings and

whether they're going to be selling blue jeans or flipping hamburgers. [*Laughter*] Well, it's funny, but it's not quite accurate. The truth is that education still makes a huge difference in what you can do with your lives and your future. It is still the key, indeed, more the key today than ever before.

The truth also is that your destiny will be filled with great chances and great choices. As with every new generation in this country, you will make your mark by exploring new frontiers. Once the challenge was settling a new continent. Now it is preparing for a new century. And you face the next American frontier, which you can see here at UCLA all around you, living with people who may seem different, working with technologies that may seem difficult, pursuing markets and opportunities that may seem distant.

For the rest of your lives you will face this choice. In the face of bewildering, intense, sometimes overpowering change, you can recoil. You can hope to do as well as you can for as long as you can simply by trying to hold the future at arm's length. Or you can act in the spirit of America or the State or this great university of which you are a part, the spirit of the families who sacrificed so much to bring you here. You can embrace the future with all of its changes and engage in what the late Oliver Wendell Holmes called "the action and passion of your time." The choice you make as individuals and as a generation will make all the difference.

Three times in this century alone our Nation has found itself a victor in global conflicts, World War I, World War II, and the cold war. Three times America has faced the fundamental question of which direction we would take, embracing or rejecting the future. Seventy-five years ago, when this university was founded, we faced one of those pivotal moments. At that time, just after the end of World War I, there was also wrenching change and enormous anxiety. The Nation's hottest new novelist was a man named F. Scott Fitzgerald. He described the so-called lost generation, the first that would graduate from UCLA. He said that they grew up, and I quote, "to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken." America withdrew from the world, seeking security in isolationism and protectionism. An ugly

withdrawal occurred here at home as well, a retreat into the trenches of racial prejudice and religious prejudice, of class bigotry and easy convenience, and a simple refusal to prepare our people to live in the world as it was.

Ten years later, just 10 years later in 1929, that decade of neglect produced the Great Depression. And soon we learned we could not withdraw from a world menaced by dictators, and we found ourselves again in a world war.

At the end of the Second World War, we made a very different choice as a people. We decided to reach out to the future together, together here at home and together with nations around the world. As Franklin Roosevelt said of the generation of my parents and the graduates' grandparents, they believed history was, I quote, "a highway on which your fellow men and women are advancing with you." Abroad, we lifted former allies and former enemies from the ashes. At home, investment in the future began with the returning warriors. The GI bill helped millions of Americans to get an education, to buy homes, to build the great American middle class. We made a solemn covenant: We would help those who would help themselves.

The wise decisions of that time built four decades of robust economic growth and expanding opportunity and laid the foundation for us to be able to win the cold war. Now, we stand at our third pivotal moment in this century. And you are designed to play the leading role. The cold war is over. It is up to all of us to keep the American dream alive here at home, even as it advances abroad. But this miracle of renewal must begin with personal decisions.

I sought the Presidency in large measure because I thought my generation had not yet done its job for America. I did not want my daughter to grow up to be part of the first generation of Americans to do worse than their parents. As we were becoming more wonderfully diverse, I did not want her to live in a country that was coming apart when it ought to be coming together. I wanted to forge the two great sources of strength that our Nation has: the power of our representative Government, as manifested in the Presi-

dency, to address the challenges of every age and time and the far, far greater power of the American people themselves to transform themselves, their families, and their communities, to seize the future and make it theirs.

My generation's responsibility to you is heavy, indeed. We are working in Washington to meet it, working to turn around the economic difficulties. And we have made a good beginning: 3 million new jobs in 15 months; 3 years of deficit reduction, 3 years of deficit reduction for the first time since Harry Truman was President; at the end of this budget cycle, the smallest Federal Government in 30 years, since John Kennedy was President, with all the savings going back to you to make America safer with more police officers on the street and programs to help our children stay out of crime and have a better future. We are investing in the technologies of tomorrow, from defense conversion to environmental protection to the information superhighway; with new attacks on our profoundest problems, from AIDS to women's health problems, to homelessness, to the deed to have enterprise development among the poor in cities and rural areas, to the terrible difficulties of our health care system. We are building education for a lifetime, from dramatic expansions in Head Start to permanent retraining programs for displaced adults. We are looking for new markets for our products and services with new trade agreements and new opportunities to sell our best efforts here around the world.

My fellow Americans, this country is on the move, and California is coming back. But the real problem I believe we have today is the problem I came to talk to you about: What will the attitude of your generation be, and how will you approach the future that is before you?

Jackie Kennedy and her husband made us believe that citizenship was a wonderful thing, that we all had the capacity to be better people and to work together, and that the things we could do together would make a very great difference indeed. If President Kennedy were alive today, he would be absolutely shocked at the pessimism, the negativism, the division, the destructive tone of public discourse in America today.

We know we can do better. But if we are to do better, you will have to lead us by looking around at all this diversity you have celebrated today, by this devotion to community you have exhausted, and bringing it out of us.

Just before I came here, I stopped briefly at Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino, which, as you know, was one of the bases closed, to announce the progress we are making at rebuilding that community with a new computer center there, with turning over the land to a new airport and for other public purposes and eventually for economic development. And it's the first one of these bases in the country that the Government has finally said, let's help people build their economy instead of dragging this out 'til kingdom come. And it was a celebration that knew no party lines, knew no philosophical lines, knew no racial lines. Nobody was out there talking about left and right and liberal and conservative and Republican and Democrat. They were talking about how we could deal with the real problems and opportunities of those people, to pull that community together and push it forward into the future. That is what we must do as a people. And that is what your generation must do in order for America to fulfill its promise.

Now, to do that in a great democracy, where there are a myriad of complex problems and legitimate differences of opinion, we must learn to do something as a people that we often take for granted in the university. We have to learn to talk to each other and to listen to each other, not to talk past each other and to scream at one another.

We have been caught up in what the Georgetown professor Deborah Tannen calls a culture of critique. One sure way to get instant public standing in our popular culture is to slam somebody else. If you work on bringing people together and you talk about it, you're likely to elicit a yawn. But if you bad-mouth people, you can get yourself a talk show.

This country was not built by bad-mouthing. Go back and look at the history of the Constitutional Convention. Go back and look at how people got together wildly different points of view and argued heatedly but always with a common love of this country and

the values of freedom and mutual respect. We have to find a way in this age and time to restore that kind of discourse and that kind of respect. We cannot afford to engage in the citizenship of division and distraction and destruction. We have a future to build, and you must lead the way. You know you can do it, because of the way you have been educated here and the people from whom you have learned and with whom you've learned. And you can lead the way for the whole future of this country.

It was because I believe that so strongly that I put at the center of what symbolizes our administration the national service corps, what we call AmeriCorps, the opportunity for tens of thousands of young people to work where they live or where they go to school, solving the problems of America at the grass-roots, learning from each other, reaching across lines that divide them, and earning money for their educations at the same time. Rebuild America and educate a new generation—it's sort of a domestic GI bill and a domestic Peace Corps all rolled into one. It was inspired by efforts that I saw all over America over the last few years, efforts like the California Campus Compact, which your chancellor helped to found, which now commits more than 50 colleges and universities in this State to helping students serve their communities. At UCLA alone some 4,000 of you are working in more than 40 service programs, and I honor you for that.

This summer 7,000 young Americans will work in a summer of safety, helping their communities to be less violent. Last summer in our first summer of service, thousands of people all over the country, including here in Los Angeles, taught young people everything from how to stay away from drugs to how to stay safe in an earthquake.

Service creates heroes. I was interested in the three people acknowledged there by Chancellor Young, and I appreciate what he said. Let me say that there's one project I'd like to mention in particular which one of the young students is involved in, Saru Jayaraman, along with another student, Desiree DeSurra. They helped to found the Women In Support of Each Other, acronym WISE. This program, WISE, helped high school girls to make wise decisions to pursue

their education and not to become single mothers. Desiree was one of three students selected to win this year's Chancellor's Humanitarian Award.

Now, let me tell you what that means to me. That is America at its best, people helping people, telling people, "Look, maybe the President should do something, maybe the chancellor of the university should do something, maybe the mayor should do something, but in the end, you also have to take responsibility for your own lives. You have to make good decisions in order to be part of a good future."

Thousands of young people just here on this campus alone have made a decision to make a difference. Beginning this September, AmeriCorps will enable tens of thousands of more to do that. I hope I live long enough to see hundreds of thousands of people in this program every year, earning their way to a better education by rebuilding America every day at the grassroots level.

The point of all that I have said is this: The future is not an inheritance, it is an opportunity and an obligation. It is something you have to make in every generation, and it will be your achievement, not only for yourselves individually but for your generation, for your community, and for the larger community that is America.

If you look around you at this incredible campus where minorities make up a majority, something that will be true for whole States in the not too distant future, you see the future. LA County with over 150 different racial and ethnic groups, thousands of people in this county celebrating this month as Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month because of the number of people who live here; a few days ago in America we celebrated the Cinco de Mayo celebration, Mexican Independence Day, and it is now as big a celebration in America as it is in Mexico because of our diversity. Will it be a source of our strength in the global village, or will we permit it to divide us? I believe I know the answer. And I think you do, too.

There's no reason to be cynical about the future, no matter how difficult our problems are. Look what's just happened in the last 4 or 5 years since many of you came to the university here, the end of the cold war; the

fall of the Berlin Wall. Just in the last year, Russia and the United States agree not to point nuclear weapons at each other anymore; Rabin and Arafat agree to self-government for the Palestinians in Jericho and the Gaza; the jailer and the jailed, de Klerk and Mandela, agree that South Africa free, united is more important than anything else.

In just a few days from now, I will go to represent you at the 50th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. Just a few days ago, I was able to speak on the 40th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. It is very important for a great country to remember those moments. But remember this, my fellow Americans: When our memories exceed our dreams, we have begun to grow old. And it is the destiny of America to remain forever young.

So I ask you this, young graduates, especially: When you see in a few days the glories of D-Day recounted, one of the most masterful mobilization of people to achieve a common objective, one of the most stunning examples of personal courage in all of human history, remember that it was the work of citizen soldiers who were mostly between the ages of 18 and 25, people who had grown up in the false prosperity of the twenties and the bitter realities of the thirties, people who read books and movies that portrayed them as slackers and the future as dark and cynical. But they rallied that day to a cause larger than themselves. And when they had done the job they were sent to do—to save their country, to save freedom, to save a civilization—they came home and got on with the business of making lives for themselves, their children, and their children's children.

Thanks to them and to God Almighty, you will probably never have to face that kind of challenge in your life but, instead, to face the challenges unique to your generation, the challenges of a new and wide-open world, the challenges of breakdown here at home that we must reverse.

I believe you are ready for that test and that you will meet it. You have the educational tools to meet it. You must now make sure that deep down inside you have the spirit, the drive, the courage, the vision. We are all depending on you.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:24 p.m. in Pauley Pavilion at the 75th anniversary convocation. In his remarks, he referred to Charles E. Young, chancellor, University of California-Los Angeles; Mayor Richard Riordan of Los Angeles; Jack W. Peltason, president, and Sue Johnson, board of regents vice chairperson, University of California; Harold T. Shapiro, president, Princeton University; Kate Anderson, president, UCLA Undergraduate Student Association; and Khosrow Khosravani, external vice president, UCLA Graduate Student Association. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senator Dianne Feinstein in Beverly Hills, California**

*May 20, 1994*

Thank you very much to my friend Willie Brown and to Sally Field for those wonderful comments, to Ron and Jan Burkle for inviting us here to their beautiful place, to Dick Blum and all the other supporters of Senator Feinstein's campaign.

There are two remarkable things about this evening for me. The first is, this is the third time I have been here, and every time I come, when I go back to the White House, I feel like I'm in reasonably nice public housing. *[Laughter]* The second thing is that I want Dianne Feinstein to be reelected so badly that I have spoken at two of her fundraisers, but this is the first one where she's showed up. *[Laughter]* It's a humbling job I've got. *[Laughter]*

You know, Hollywood discovers stars all the time, and now America is beginning to discover Dianne Feinstein. *[Applause]* You can clap for that. She's sort of replacing Tommy Lasorda as the person people think of when they think of California. *[Laughter]* You know, before I started running for President, that's what I thought of in California. I'd see Tommy Lasorda getting smaller and smaller and smaller on television, saying he'd shrunk himself with that Slim-Fast. That's what we're trying to pour into the Federal budget. *[Laughter]* Now the deficit is down; the Dodgers are in first place. I've asked

Lasorda to take over the lobbying for health care reform. *[Laughter]*

I don't know—before we get to Dianne's main event we'll have to watch this primary with Bill Dannemeyer and Michael Huffington, who spent \$5½ million of his own money in the last election. And now he's spent \$2 million to go on television to review Bill Bennett's book. I don't know how she can hope to meet and defeat a person who is foursquare for virtue. But I want to say a little more about that in a moment. I think Dianne Feinstein works for virtue and embodies virtue, and I hope she will be returned on that basis.

I want to say something serious, if I might. This is a, actually, kind of tough day for me to give a speech. I had the opportunity, as Senator Feinstein said, to go with her and Senator Boxer and others to the Inland Empire today to talk about how we could revitalize San Bernardino after the Norton Air Force Base closure and what is being done there, which is truly astonishing, and then to go to UCLA and speak to some wonderful young people at their convocation. But this is a sad day for Hillary and for me because Jackie Kennedy Onassis passed away last night, and she was not only a great symbol of courage and grace and dignity for our country, but she was a real friend of ours and a special friend of my wife and very kind to our wonderful daughter. And like many of you, when I heard last night that she had lost her fight, my mind began to race over the last 30 years, back to how it was then, back to how it is now, back and forth, what happened in between.

One thing that Jackie and John Kennedy surely did was to make us all believe that somehow together we could make a difference, that what we did mattered, that our role as citizens was important, and that if we gave ourselves to public service, that was the sign of good judgment and compassion. It was a fine thing to do. In other words, we lived in a time then when there was much less cynicism and pessimism and skepticism and in which public discourse was a thing of honor, not a shouting match bent on destruction and division and distraction.

I honestly believe that our ability to bring this country into the 21st century as strong